



Hepatitis Update

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INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Viral Hepatitis Serology Workshop	1
Hepatitis 101	1
Tommy Chandler Excellence Award	2
HCV Baby Boomer Poster	2
Spotlight on Taylor County	3
50th Anniversary HBV Discovery	3
HCV & Persons who Inject Drugs	4-5
Tattooing in Florida	5

Hepatitis Update is brought to you by the Division of Disease Control and Health Protection, Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD and Viral Hepatitis Section.

If you have a news item or photo you would like to submit, email the editor at:

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Viral Hepatitis Serology Workshop

By April Crowley

Back by popular demand, it's the Viral Hepatitis Serology Workshop: A Course in Laboratory Testing, Results, and Interpretations.

This workshop is available in TRAIN, the **Florida Department of Health's Official Learning Management System** at: <https://fl.train.org/desktopshell.aspx>.

Here's how to find the course: Look in the upper right-hand corner search area and type in "FDOH Viral Hepatitis Serology Workshop."

You can take the course online anytime and any day of the week. Upon completion, it will let you print out a certificate. Any health care worker can take this workshop. One CEU is available for all licensed nurses in Florida.

Kudos and thanks to **Maura Comer** and **Jessi Embleton** with the Bureau of Communicable Diseases and **Jamie DeMent** with the Bureau of Epidemiology for their help in updating this workshop.

Also, **Hepatitis 101**, an introduction to hepatitis A, B and C, is now in TRAIN. Look in the search area and type in "FDOH Hepatitis 101." Nurses in Florida can receive one CEU for this course, too. We also provide it live, via webinar, every other month. You can register on our website at: www.FlaHepatitis.org.

The first time I taught Hepatitis 101 in November of 2003, I was a little nervous, to say the least. My biggest fear was that someone would ask a question and I wouldn't know the answer. Since I am not a scientist, I was afraid of looking foolish. What I've discovered is if I don't know the answer to a question, chances are someone else in the audience does and they are happy to share the information. If not, I'll get the answer after the class and email it to all the participants.

Speaking of scientists, I came across this funny story about world-renowned physicist and Nobel Prize winner Robert A. Millikan. One day, Dr. Millikan's wife was passing through the hall and overheard their maid on the phone say, "Yes, this is where Dr. Millikan lives, but he's not the kind of doctor that does anybody any good."

That reminds me of one of my favorite quotes from Joan Rivers: "Never be afraid to laugh at yourself, after all, you could be missing out on the joke of the century."



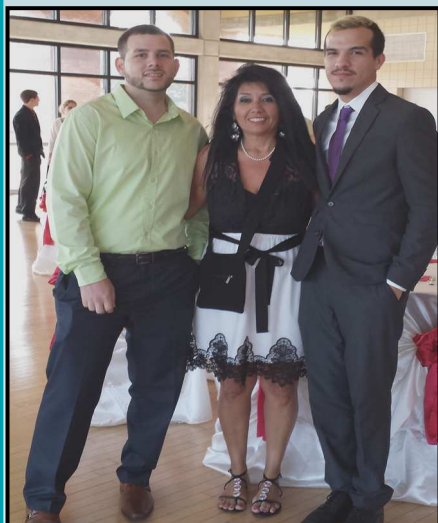
Tommy Chandler Excellence Award

By Dan George

We are **very** pleased to announce that **Ramona Mills**, Disease Intervention Specialist (DIS) representing DOH-Escambia STD Program, is the 2015 Tommy Chandler Excellence Award recipient. In addition, three outstanding DIS performers, **Christopher Douglas** (DOH-Leon STD Program), **Caleb Lords** (DOH-Orange STD Program) and **Janay Armstrong** (DOH-Sarasota STD Program) are recipients of a 2015 Tommy Chandler Honorable Recognition Certificate.



Tommy Chandler



Ramona with her sons Josh & Zach

The Tommy Chandler Excellence Award is given to a person who exhibits outstanding dedication to disease intervention. It is the highest award specific to the STD DIS workforce that one can receive from the Florida STD and Viral Hepatitis Program.

For those of you who are not familiar with Tommy Chandler, he started his career with DOH-Duval in 1963 (not a typo) and is still there today working to prevent STDs by way of mentoring new DIS and pursuing those in need of STD/HIV prevention services. With 52 years of outstanding performance in STD/HIV prevention, Tommy is the epitome of a truly dedicated public health servant, hence this special award is named in his honor.

Please join us in congratulating Ramona, Christopher, Caleb and Janay.

Hepatitis C Baby Boomer Poster

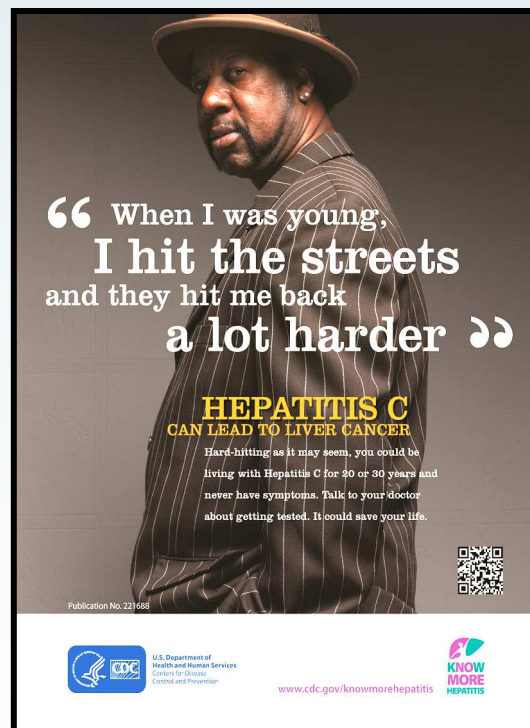
By Jessi Embleton

The STD and Viral Hepatitis Section has the following 24x36 poster (see photo below) available. This is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) *Know More Hepatitis* campaign. It reinforces the fact that you could be living with hepatitis C for 20 or 30 years and never have symptoms.

Since we only have a limited amount of these posters available for distribution, please contact me as soon as possible. We will send them out on a first-come, first-served basis. I can be reached at Jessi.Embleton@flhealth.gov, or 850-245-4139.



In 2012, the CDC issued recommendations calling for people born from 1945-1965 to get tested for hepatitis C. To help implement this recommendation, the CDC developed *Know More Hepatitis*, a national education campaign. Their goal is to reduce the morbidity and mortality associated with hepatitis C by increasing testing among baby boomers so those who are infected can get linked to life-saving care.



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Spotlight on Taylor County

By April Crowley

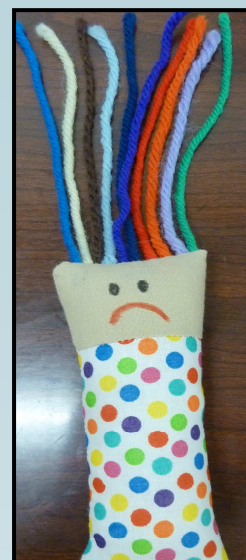
Donna Wheeler, our field services coordinator, provides technical assistance (TA) visits to health departments to discuss hepatitis prevention, surveillance, and other related issues with regard to viral hepatitis activities in that county.

Recently, Donna made a TA visit to DOH-Taylor. She returned home with an “ouchy baby.” (See photos to the right.) “Ouchy babies” are given to children who visit the local health department.

Children rarely like going to any type of medical facility, and some are downright terrified, especially if they’re getting a shot. Some children start screaming as soon as they step into a doctor’s office. And, guess what? It’s not just kids who freak out in these situations. *White coat hypertension*, more commonly known as *white coat syndrome*, is a phenomenon in which patients exhibit a blood pressure level above the normal range in a clinical setting, although



Front of the “ouchy baby”



Flip side of the “ouchy baby”



Left to right: Amber Slaughter, RN, Padraic Juarez, CHD Administrator, and Rachel Lavalle, RN, Director of Nursing

they don't exhibit it in other settings. According to WebMD, as much as 20 percent of the population suffers from *white coat syndrome*.

“Ouchy babies” help eliminate some of the fear that children (and probably a few adults) experience when they step into DOH-Taylor. Amber Slaughter, a registered nurse in Taylor, says the “ouchy babies” are hand-made and donated to the health department by women in the community. Amber remembers the “ouchy babies” from her childhood, which means they’ve been around for at least 25 years.

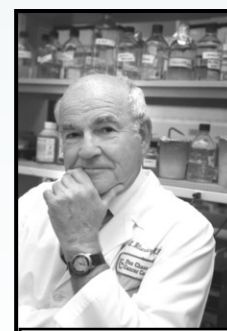
This is just one example of the close relationship between the DOH and the residents of Taylor County.

2015 Marked 50th Anniversary of HBV Discovery

www.hepb.org/news/release

This year observed the 50th anniversary of the discovery of the hepatitis B virus (HBV) by Baruch S. Blumberg, MD. Dr. Blumberg, who passed away in 2011, received the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1976 for his discovery of the virus. In 1969, he and his colleagues also developed the blood test that is used to detect the virus and invented the first hepatitis B vaccine.

Dr. Blumberg was the co-founder of the Hepatitis B Foundation, a national non-profit organization dedicated to finding a cure and improving the quality of life of those affected by hepatitis B.



Dr. Blumberg

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Hepatitis C and Persons Who Inject Drugs

By Phil Reichert



Phil Reichert

In the last issue of *Hepatitis Update*, I wrote about a summit that was convened in Atlanta at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) on July 20–21 of this year. Having 14 pages of hand-written notes from only the first day of the summit, I want to share some additional insights delivered by the panels of experts invited to speak. The official title of the meeting was *Summit on Stopping the Hepatitis C Virus Epidemic among Young Persons Who Inject Drugs*. The meeting was prompted by an outbreak of injecting drug use by young people in rural and suburban areas around the country, especially along the Appalachian Mountains in the eastern U.S.

A small community in southeastern Indiana reported a significant increase in reported HIV and hepatitis C cases in early 2015 due to young people shooting up heroin and other opioids and sharing their needles and syringes. Several epidemiologists from CDC and the Indiana Department of Health who investigated those cases were present at the CDC summit to discuss their findings. Other medical and public health experts offered commentary on the subject of persons who inject drugs (PWID).

Interestingly, prescription opioids such as oxycodone and hydrocodone were the culprit for several years. The pills were obtained illegally, crushed, and injected. In recent years, heroin has made a resurgence because the cost is significantly lower than that of prescription opioids. Where one oxycodone pill can cost \$100 on the street, one hit of heroin can be only \$7 to \$10. Daniel Raymond, Policy Director for the Harm Reduction Coalition said, “Reported hepatitis C cases are a leading indicator for injecting drug use in the U.S.” Dr. Shruti Mehta, a professor at Johns Hopkins University, expressed the need to expand hepatitis C testing in the U.S. She also stated a need to link hepatitis C-positive individuals to follow-up care and treatment. She said that integration of HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis screening services are best for the PWID population.

David Hickton, an attorney for the U.S. Department of Justice in Pennsylvania, shared these statistics: In 1999, there was a drug-related death in the U.S. every 30 minutes. In 2013, there was one every 12 minutes. Illegal drug use kills more people in the U.S. than traffic deaths each year. He said that naloxone should be available to all law enforcement personnel to prevent drug overdose deaths. A 360-degree solution to the drug problem needs to attack it on the supply side (that is, drug trafficking) and the demand side, using drug rehabilitation. “Injecting drug use should be treated as a public health issue and not a law enforcement issue,” said Hickton.

It was stated that incarceration does not seem to deter drug use. Injecting drug use is a *medical* problem that needs a *medical* solution. We need to teach young children to delay their experimentation with drugs and alcohol. The longer they delay, the less likely they are to develop an addiction. Mobile vans with screening clinics seem to work best because they take services to the disenfranchised population instead of expecting them to seek out services.

Scott Holmberg, a physician epidemiologist with CDC’s Division of Viral Hepatitis, stated that there was an increase in acute hepatitis C cases in the U.S. from 2010–2012, probably due to injecting drug use. The injection drug use cases are getting younger, most being under 30 years old. More young people are initiating injecting drug use by the time they are 17 years old, especially in rural and suburban areas.

This article is continued on page 5.



L to R: Daniel Raymond, Harm Reduction Coalition; Dr. Shruti Mehta, Johns Hopkins University; and David Hickton, US Dept. of Justice

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Bureau of Communicable Diseases, STD and Viral Hepatitis Section

Hepatitis C and Persons Who Inject Drugs continued from page 4:

Scott Stokes, Director of Prevention Services at the AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin, said, "In 1994, the average age of our drug-using clientele was 35. In 2014, it was 24."

Regarding treatment for hepatitis C, Dr. Margaret Hellard, the head of the Burnet Institute for Medical Research and Public Health in Melbourne, Australia, said individuals are more likely to adhere to a treatment schedule if they are going through the process with a buddy. She said they encourage people who test positive for hepatitis C to refer their friends for screening. She called it the "Treat Your Friends" strategy.

For more information on hepatitis C in persons who inject drugs, go to: www.cdc.gov/hepatitis/outbreaks/youngpwid.htm. Slides from the presentations are at: www.viralhepatitisaction.org/summit-stopping-hepatitis-c-virus-epidemic-among-young-persons-who-inject-drugs.



L to R: Scott Homberg, CDC; Scott Stokes, AIDS Resource Center of Wisconsin; and, Margaret Hellard, Burnet Institute in Australia

Tattooing in Florida

By April Crowley

At the Florida Viral Hepatitis Planning Group meeting in August that was held in Tampa, one of the topics that came up more than once was hepatitis C and tattooing. Member Robert Wallace, MD, pointed out that tattoo parties are very popular right now. People attending these parties have told him they use new needles every time, but they're reusing the ink. They are not aware that the hepatitis C virus (HCV) can live in the ink for up to four days.

As far as hepatitis C being transmitted by tattooing, the biggest concern is receiving a tattoo in a non-professional setting. Examples of this include tattoo parties and incarceration. All persons tattooing in our state are required to have a current tattoo artist license or guest tattoo registration from the Florida Department of Health (DOH), Bureau of Environmental Health. They have to be at least 18 years of age and complete an educational course on blood-borne pathogens and communicable diseases approved by the department. In addition to the tattoo artist license or guest tattoo registration, tattooing shall only occur at a DOH licensed tattoo establishment or temporary establishment.

If you plan on getting a tattoo, here are some things to remember:

- ◆ Never get tattooed in someone's house or in a hotel room.
- ◆ Only go to licensed and inspected shops that only hire licensed tattoo artists.
- ◆ Before anyone touches you, ask to see their tattoo artist license or guest tattoo registration.
- ◆ Verify that only new needles are being used and that unused ink is discarded after the tattoo is over.



For more information about tattooing in Florida, visit: www.floridahealth.gov/Environmental-Health/tattooing

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